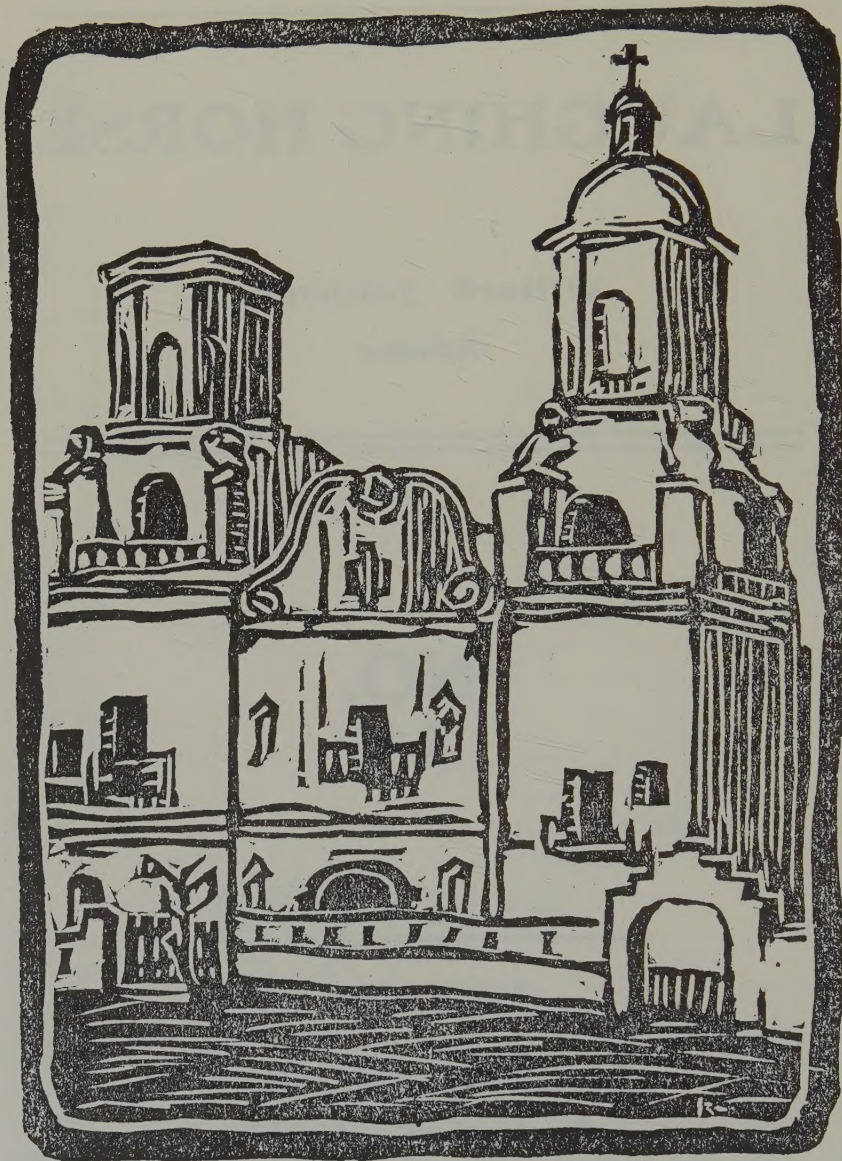

LAUGHING HORSE

Willard Johnson

Editor

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Arizona Mission

Richard Crisler

While the Train Pauses at Torreon

by Witter Bynner



EDERICO Gamboa, when a member of Huerta's cabinet, worsted Wilson's Secretary of State, Bryan, in an exchange of notes; but, better than that, he is a Mexican author.

I happen to be on the same train with him when he arrives at Torreon in the State of Chihuahua. At the station, an expert band is playing him welcome; and between banners which hail him as "la gloria de las letras Mexicanas", he is being led by officials, on a national holiday, into this town of cotton, flour and iron mills.

What such flowering of the spirit has my own country to offer amidst all the massive mechanics of its civilization?


When we Americans come to Mexico humbly, when we forget to criticize the railroads, the hotels, the clothes, the mechanical status of the country, when we open our hearts and minds to the conscious earth that resists vulgarities, to the courtesy, the innate intelligence, the quiet force, the ease, the quickness, the sensitiveness, the endurance, the smile of these people, we shall begin to appreciate the nearness to our borders of a natural university for our youth. Unfortunately, the nearer Mexicans come to the aforesaid borders, the more rapidly they learn

the gist of what we to the north of them know and the more deplorably they forfeit both outer and inner grace.

All this is being jotted down while the train still pauses at Torreon, while Gamboa's gesture of appreciation is still in the air; but the record is no momentary impulse, it is the result of a year of months spent in Mexico during 1923 and 1925.

Be it said at once that I am for the most part puzzled by Mexican aristocracy and officialdom and by the bourgeoisie. These classes seem in many ways unworthy of their supposed inferiors. With notable exceptions, they turn to Europe or to the United States for inspiration or example, when, obviously, they need to trust and cultivate the basic qualities of their own race. It is the Mexican Indians who challenge and deserve homage: human beings as graceful and rewarding as corn, as self-sustaining and self-defending as cactus, as violent and quick to change as Mexican sky, as firm and slow to change as Mexican mountains. From them, be it hoped, comes future Mexico. From them comes a spirit of civilization strange to motorists. From them come wisdom and laughter, a proportioned sense of the values of life, a power to work when work is necessary, a power to endure when endurance is necessary, a power to oppose when opposition is necessary, to smile and live and fight at happy intervals and to loaf magnificently when the earth commands.


Yes, these are qualities under the sun and moon.



But under government, under the economic harness in which the world is driven, how are they then, these Mexicans? How are these estimable Indians as officials, as governmental instruments? They are like the Chinese. They are often enough honest grafters. They speak hypocrasies on occasion, but they also take occasion to wink. They fill the heart, the stomach and the pocket as conveniently as they can, but almost always they exercise therewith the morality of humour. They are not like Anglo-Saxons, 'weaned on pickles', grimly swallowing scruples and using a Christian cook-book to explain unholy diet. Our American humour is too frequently a humour of fear lest the other fellow laugh first, a defensive humour lest we be thought slow or stupid or sensitive or tender or decent or just. Mexican humour, humour among the Mexican Indians is more natural, more vital, more imaginative. The Mexican Indian is often obscene, but with the earth's obscenity, often cruel, but with the earth's cruelty; lest he might succeed in becoming pompous or pretentious or greedy, in ways false to his bit of substance with the earth.

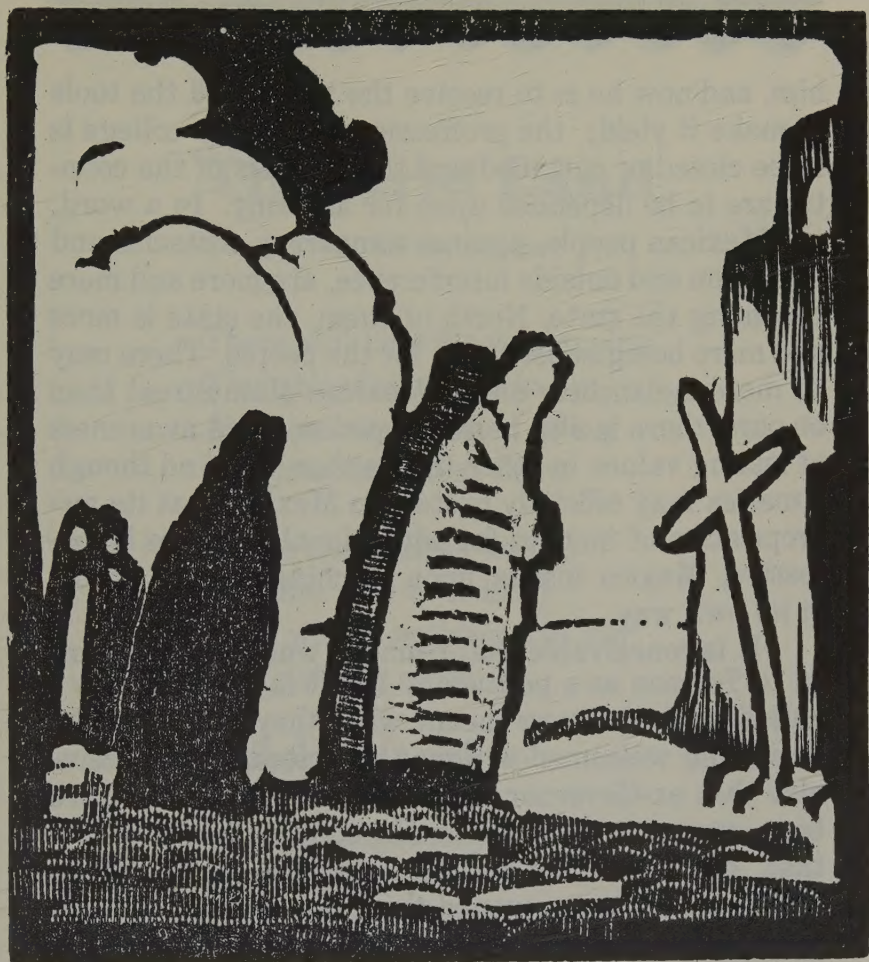
Besides his sense of humour, he has an awareness that, in the long run and in the large sense, justice is inevitable. Revolutions may have helped in the lesson. He may close one eye, but he seldom closes both eyes.

It has been said of Senor Calles, President of the Republic, that he manipulates the national law to indulge his own career and pocket and of Senor Zuno,




recently Governor of Jalisco, that he put the Guadalupe street-cars out of business because he controlled the supply of busses; just as it has been said of Mr. Coolidge, President of the United States, that he would have preferred to retain rascals in his cabinet and of Mr. Mellon, Secretary of our Treasury, that because he and his family are major beneficiaries of the aluminum trust, he grossly favours it.

Let us assume, for purposes of comparison, that these charges are true, both in Mexico and in the United States. In Mexico there is an important offset. The public, the consumer, may in both countries be robbed with the left hand. Obregon and Fall may both own ranches which they never earned by service to the state. Yet in America, the aggrandizement at the moment is all one way. President Coolidge removes from this and that public commission members who might act as watch-dogs for public interest against private interest. He has given, otherwise, ample evidence of believing that there is no public interest of the many, except through the preferred private interest of the few. His disregard of the ordinary citizen's welfare is implacable, whole-souled and complete. In Mexico a few important pockets may be neatly and unduly lined, but on the whole the ordinary citizen looms higher and higher as a conscious and considerable decider of Mexican destiny. The Mexican labourer is being handed the beginnings of a real education, not merely pious bunk but the facts of economics and the satisfactions of art; land has been given



Mexican Women

Will Shuster



him, and now he is to receive the water and the tools to make it yield; the professional military college is to be closed or curtailed and the workers of the country are to be depended upon for an army. In a word, the Mexican people, against temporary obstacles and confusion and outside interference, are more and more becoming the state. North of them, the state is more and more being substituted for the people. There may be more melancholy on the Mexican Main Street than on ours; there is also more happiness, more awareness of lasting values in other things than oil. And though America may officially protest to Mexico that its appropriation of moneys for educational purposes is excessive, Mexico insists upon teaching its own people in its own way.

It is conceivable that Gamboa was being welcomed to Torreon as a politician; but it is not inconceivable that the banners meant what they said, that he was being welcomed as a man of letters. It is conceivable that ex-Governor Zuno of Jalisco may not have been averse to his own welfare; it is incontestable that, besides easing and bettering the life of Jalisco labourers, he has reopened the University of Guadalajara after its long desuetude and has even offered a free Mexican trip to the winner of an American poetry contest. American Governors please notice.

There are bandits in the United States as well as in Mexico. There is oil in Mexico as well as in the United States. There is civilization in both countries, each after its kind and each complementary, though not always complimentary, to the other.



The Arid Land

by Lynn Riggs

There will be willows plunging
Their bloodless roots in air
And the hard crooked flying
Of buzzards circled there.

About the treeless wastes
No sand may ever heap
With water, nothing will run
And nothing creep.

Arid, desolate, defiant
Under its iron band
Of sky, we yet may love
This so sunny land.

One Smoke Stories

by Mary Austin



HE corn husk cigarettes which, for ceremonial purposes at least, are still used south of the Green River and west of the Rio Grande, last only a little while. Since they are made chiefly of the biting native 'tabac', this is, perhaps, not to be regretted.


You select your husk from the heap and gather your pinch of the weed from the dark bowl as it passes the ancient ceremonial road from east to north by west to south, and holding the dry roll delicately between your lips endeavor to dispatch the salutatory puffs to the six, or, if you happen to be among the Te-wa or the Navajo, the four world quarters.

Then, holding the crisp cylinder between thumb and finger tip, first one and then another of the company begins, always gravely, and holds on for the space of one smoke, tales as deft, as finished in themselves as a ceremonial cigarette. Or, if not a tale, then a clean round out of the speaker's experience that in our kind of society might turn up a sonnet or an etching. The essence of such stories is that they should be located somewhere in the inner ear of the audience, unencumbered by what in our more discursive method is known as background. For your true desert dweller travels light. He makes even of his experience



Cottonwood

Richard Crisler




a handy package. Just before the end, like the rattle that warns that the story is about to strike, comes the fang of the experience, oftenest in the shape of a wise saying. Then the speaker resumes the soul-consoling smoke, while another takes up the dropped stitch of narrative and weaves it into the pattern of the talk.

The one-smoke story draws from all the ways of thinking and knowing that the Red Man has. So that if those I render, fumbling for the native quality, seem all of one philosophic key, that is merely a matter of personal choice. Some of those I have heard can not be retold with propriety in our tongue, and some are too profound for our understanding. The best that can be hoped from my retelling is that nothing is added to or taken from them in my hands.

The Coyote Song

Hear a telling of the Song the Coyote gave to Cinoave and took away again, in the days when every man had his own song, and no one might sing a man's own song without his permission. Thus it was among our fathers' fathers. When his son was born, when he had killed his enemy or first made a woman to know him as a man, out of his great moment he made a song and sang it on his own occasions. Sometimes it was a song for the people, which he left as a legacy when he died. There were also songs to be sung while he was dying, by himself if he were able, or the friends



who stood around him; or it might be the song was so secret that it passed only between the singer and his God.


But Cinoave had no song. When the tribe came together for the dance of the Marriageable Maidens, or for the feast of the Pinon Harvest, Cinoave would busy himself gathering brushwood for the fire. Or he would sit apart from the others pretending to mend a pipe or sharpen an arrow, hoping not to hear the tribesmen whisper to one another, "There is Cinoave, the man without a song."

This to Cinoave was sadness. For without a proper song how can a man win favor of the gods or women? Thus say the fathers. Then, one day when he was digging tule roots by the river, the Coyote came by and said, "What will you take for your sweet roots, Cinoave?"

Said Cinoave, "I will take a song." For is not the Coyote the father of songmaking?

"What kind of a song?" said the Coyote, for though he meant to strike a bargain, he wished to hold out as long as possible. Cinoave considered within himself.

"A song that will warm the hearts of the tribe and stir up their thoughts within them," said Cinoave. This was a good asking. When the heart is warm and the thoughts deeply stirred, one ascends without difficulty to the Friend-of-the-Soul-of-Man and all things accord with our interests. "I wish a song so pleasing,"




said Cinoave, "that all men hearing it will say, 'Surely this is a Coyote song!'" This was said in flattery, for he knew, having thrown him a tule root to taste, that Old Man Coyote would not go away without his belly full. Also he wished to make sure that it would not prove a Coyote giving.

That is a saying of our fathers for a gift that is taken back again when the giver is so minded. Cinoave threw him a fat, sweet root and when it was eaten he said, "Swear to me it will not be a Coyote giving."

The Coyote swore by the pelt of his mother, "So long as the song is used for what it is given, to warm the hearts of the Tribe and stir up their thoughts within them, it will not be taken away." Then Cinoave threw him the bag of roots and they were well pleased with the bargain.


That year at the feast of the Pinon Harvest when the tribes came together, Cinoave sang his song and the people were astonished, saying, "Surely this is a Coyote song?" In every camp there was talk of it, and the pride of Cinoave swelled like a young gourd in the rain. Everywhere he went singing it, their hearts were warmed and their thoughts stirred up within them. So it went until the feast of The-Grass-on-the-Mountain. Then the tribes and the sub-tribes came together at the place called Corn Water and there was no one who could sing equal to Cinoave. They had him sing his Coyote Song over and over, and as he listened to the talk and the hand clapping he changed the words



of the song so that those who heard it should say,
“This is the Song of Cinoave.”

It was now some months since he had bought the song of the Coyote, and the song and the praise of it had entered into his bones. He thought of nothing but being praised and remembered for the power of his singing. So he sang it until he and the people were all wearied, and fell into the deep sleep of exhaustion. But because he had forgotten that the song could only be sung for the purpose for which it was given, Old Man Coyote came in the night and stole the song away. When the people awoke it was discovered that not one of them could remember a word of it.

Thus it has become a custom among the Piautes, when it is remarked that a man warms the hearts of the tribe by his singing and stirs up their thoughts within them, we do not praise him much. For who knows but it may turn out to be a Coyote Song? And when a song is used for other than the purpose of the giving, may not the Giver of it take it away?





Story-teller


Harry P. Mera

The Woman Who Was Never Satisfied

There was a Navajo of the Chinlee country had a wife who, when she was in one place wished always to be in another. In everything else she was a good wife to him, but if they stayed at their summer hogan among the Peach Orchards, she thought of Shiprock, and at the lambing pens of Tseghi she longed for the open country. Her husband, to please her, traded his horses for sheep, so that it should be in the way of his work to be always moving from place to place; but no matter how good the pastures, the woman was sure they were never so fattening as the place where they would be tomorrow or the one they had just left.

"I think," said her husband good naturedly, "that even in the Underworld you would not be satisfied!" But that was unlucky, to speak of the death of a living person as a thing already accomplished. For, within a year or two, his wife sickened, and though he had a White doctor from Shiprock there was no saving her.

She was buried in the place of the Peach Orchards, and the next day the Navajo began to move his flock toward Moencopie. It was the one place where they had not been together, and he hoped by this means to avoid thinking of his wife, whom he had loved greatly. But on the fourth day between the day and dusk she came back. Her husband found her sitting by the fire as he came in from the feeding ground, and he was glad to see her, though as a wife she was no more




than seeming. Nevertheless, he could not forbear to say to her, "I hope this time, my dear, you will be satisfied." So for a time it seemed she would be, and whenever her husband saw that she was getting restless, he moved the flock.

Thus they traveled across the Moencopie country and struck into their old round. They met friends, who were astonished to find that the woman had come back. They spoke her kindly, but they would not sit at her hearth, and if she came to theirs they remembered errands that they had elsewhere, for it is feared among the Navajo that if the dead return it is not for any good purpose. It was about this time that her husband, as he walked with the flock, would have glimpses of her hurrying on the trails, or wandering about the open country like a child that is lost. Every now and then she would strike into a trail and would run along it as if by swiftness to overtake that which was sought, and when it ended in a spring or an abandoned camp, she would come circling like a dog to pick up a viewless track. Whenever her husband came up with her she would whimper and whisper, "I can not find it, I can not find it," and he would point her the way back to their camp, though he knew very well that that was not what she was looking for.

To ease her, the Navajo shifted his feeding ground toward Chaco, for there are many trails of our Ancients in that place, and "chindee hogans."¹ -- Who knows

¹ Haunted houses.



where the trail of the Underworld begins, or if, like the torneo, it may not come twisting to find us ? On the way to Kin Klazhin they found a White man with his pack beside a dripping spring, far gone with the breathing sickness, so that blood came out of his mouth with his breath. Many such come into the Navajo country, but this one had come too late; also he had lost his way and had wearied himself past enduring. This the Navajo saw as he stooped to ease the man of his sickness, and as he looked toward his wife to convey his thought, for he wished not to have the man hear him, he saw that her eyes glittered suddenly, and begged, like a dog's. He was silent for a deep breath taking, in which the White man was not remembered, for the Navajo saw what was in her mind, and, loving her greatly, he wished that she might be satisfied. "You must be very sure, my dear, this time," he said, "these partings wrench the heart." But he thought this time, perhaps, she would be.


For three days the Navajo disposed his flock as he best could, for there was not much grass in that country, while with his wife he nursed the White man. This was not easy, for when it was necessary for the sick man to be moved, though the woman put her hands on him, it was the Navajo who lifted, for there was no power in her, and it was hoped that the White man would not notice.

Nevertheless he may have known, for often there is unknowing in those whose trail of life is ending, and



Landscape


Jozef Bakos



if he knew the way he was about to go, he may have been glad of company. He was not deceived about his sickness, for he told the Navajo what to do with his pack and a letter he had written.

It was toward morning of the third night that the Navajo heard his wife call him, for with the flock to keep, and all, he could no wise do without sleeping. He answered to her voice and saw that her eyes were shining. The White man struggled to rise from his blankets, and as the Navajo stooped to lift him, blood came with his breath. As the Navajo was easing him to his side, the sick man made a little noise toward the woman, as he did when he wanted her, which was afterward a great comfort to the Navajo to remember, for as he raised himself from stooping over the dead man he was aware suddenly that he was alone with himself. Beside the dogs and the flock there was nothing with him. For those who go to Sippapu go like the torneo, wrapping their trail around them.

"I hope," said the Navajo, "that this time she will be satisfied."



[There will be more of Mrs. Austin's
One-Smoke Stories in the next issue
of the Laughing Horse.]



Fiesta


by Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant

Under white hooped tops of prairie schoon-
ers come dark Pueblos, bearing plenty over
desert ridges.

Heads bound with purple, like the seers,
they stare from wrinkled Eastern masks
and smile with tilted eyes.

I glimpse black pots and deep, benignant
breasts of women in the hay, while thatch-
haired young reach out for yellow melons.

Here jolt Pueblos, smiling through a sheen
of dust. Corn growers, amigos of the Rain
Gods, who make swift showers fall in drops
that pit the sand.




Two Southwestern Novels

by Mary Hunter

The wealth of southwestern material is being tapped for our novels. Two novels by writers distinctly different in personal and literary contacts appear in one season, both located in the country of the upper Rio Grande: — Willa Cather's "Death Comes for the Archbishop" and Harvey Fergusson's "Wolf Song."

In both books the story is distinguished chiefly for the scene; the power of the country controls and dominates. "Wolf Song" is a short story disguised as a novel, and at that it gallops along from the opening shout -- "Hump yourself, you Goddam mule! This outfit's bound for Taos!" -- to its amorous close, riddling the reader with gunshot sentences on the way. Made out of semi-historical material (including some of the best John Dunn stories) taken from the lives of such romantic figures as Kit Carson, the story runs as the life of Sam Lash, mountain man and trapper who carries off and marries the daughter of an old Spanish family of Taos. He leaves her temporarily for his old life, is nearly killed by an Indian, and turns back to Taos and church marriage with Lola. Simple enough but made into good entertainment by vivid telling and something more in the hasty pictures of Taos in the 1820's or so.

"Death Comes for the Archbishop," only a quarter of a century later in time, is more than a century



later in change. Though pitched in the period in which the Americans, military and civil, were glutting themselves with domination and the majority of Spanish sunk in sullen passivity, the book reflects almost nothing of that, nothing of the stress and strain of the Civil War, nothing but the ecclesiastical life of the diocese.

Miss Cather's book is in many ways a solitary haven for the somewhat battered reader of current fiction. It is a "priestly chronicle," published in the year of Our Lord 1927, told with a quiet charm recalling the "Mirror of Perfection," but it lacks the quality of fervor which makes such books move and grow. The story does not progress in any direction: the two French priests, the Bishop Jean Marie Latour and Father Joseph Vaillant, enter the story fully developed and so remain save for a tendency to disintegrate toward the end. Father Joseph merges into the American environment and so becomes lost to the story even before the event of his death, while the Archbishop remains aloof, detached, observant of but never involved in the business of living. Though Miss Cather has used the building of the Romanesque cathedral in native yellow rock as a symbol of linkage to the country, it is somehow unconvincing, and in spite of the fact that you are discreetly couriered through New Mexico, she has entered so completely into the detachment of her character that only the detachment remains when the book is closed. It is, on the whole, a

loose chronicle of events, persons, and pilgrimages, told with a gentle beauty and when most of the episodes have rather easily slipped out of mind, there are left the delightful stories of the white mules and Dona Isabella and the knowledge of having made the acquaintance of two splendid people.



**And Here The Horse
Ran Away With Us**